

Vocabulary of Cinematic Sequences

Aerial Shot

An extremely high angle view that is commonly considered a bird's eye view. It is the perspective of action as seen from a plane, helicopter or elevated position.

Blocking

The arrangement of actors and major props. In traditional theatre blocking is respective of the audience location. In cinematics blocking is respective of camera position.

Camera angle / Position

The placement of a camera relative to the main focal elements of the scene. The scriptwriter may make camera position suggestions based on artistic visualization. Camera position changes the audience's response to a scene.

Continuity Style

The style of filming that emphasizes spatial and temporal continuity between sequences. This is the dominant style of filmmaking. The continuity style encourages audience understanding by promoting a sense that events were filmed as they happened.

Cutaway

A single shot inserted into a sequence that momentarily interrupts the general flow of action. A cutaway may be used to provide information about setting or other important details.

Detail Shot

A highly magnified version of a close-up. It is meant to show a fragment of a whole subject.

Establishing Shot

A shot meant to orient the viewer to important information about the mood or environment of subsequent scenes. Establishing shots are generally wider than master shots.

Follow Shot

A shot in which the subject is followed

Jump Cut

A set of contiguously placed shots that omits frames to produce a general sense of choppiness. Jump cuts are often used to portray events in a short amount of time.

Loose Composition / Loose Shot

When a shot is composed loosely, the frame around the shot contains a significant amount of space.

Master Shot:

A shot from which all dramatic events can be understood. If no other shot was used for the sequence, a master shot would suffice to inform the audience. A master shot is typically not as wide as an establishing shot.

Montage:

A collage of related symbolic shots that convey story without using dialogue. A montage may use a dissolve or similar transition between shots.

Off Camera / Off Screen

The same as offstage, it is a direction that indicates action or sound occurring out of audience's view.

On Camera

The same as on stage, it is a direction that indicates action or sound occurring in view of the audience.

Over the Shoulder (OTS)

A shot in which the main subject is framed by the back of the head and shoulder of a foreground subject. This is common in filming conversation.

Perspective

The same as in graphic arts, the illusion of depth on a two dimensional surface.

Point of View (POV)

The viewpoint. It is understood that a point of view is meant to represent that of a character in the scene.

Principal Photography

The production photography of a film or cinematic sequence. The term is also used to define the time during which the photography is occurring. As in "we were in principal photography for 3 months."

Reaction Shot

The shot of a character's reaction, typically in dialogue. An average reaction shot is done as an OTS or close up, while the foreground character is speaking.

Static Camera

Any shot in which the camera does not move.

Take

One version of a shot. In normal filming the action of a film is repeated for several takes until the director interprets a harmony in cinematic elements.

Tight

A shot that leaves very little space between the subject and frame.

Voice-Over (VO)

The voice of an unseen narrator

Wipe

A transition between shots.